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TAGS: PREL UNSC ZL CH RS SR

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: CHINESE MFA SEES POSITIONS HARDENING

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Daniel Shields.
Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) China sees positions concerning Kosovo as hardening, both between Serbs and Kosovars and among some UNSC members, the Deputy Director for MFA's Balkans Division told poloff. China supports Special Envoy Ahtisaari's efforts, but Beijing's position that it will only back a result agreed to by all sides remains unchanged. PermRep Wang Guangya in New York has consulted with Serb and Kosovar representatives. China thinks the views of Europe and Russia on Kosovo deserve deference, but Beijing does not expect Kosovo to be a significant topic in talks during President Hu Jintao's upcoming visit to Moscow. End Summary.

¶2. (C) After the March 10 breakdown in talks between Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, China sees little likelihood of compromise over Kosovo's future, MFA Europe Department Balkans Division Deputy Director Hua Yafang told poloff March ¶22. China supports Special Envoy Ahtisaari in his efforts to find a solution agreeable to both sides, but is growing less optimistic. Beijing has not formulated a firm overall position on the details of Ahtisaari's plan, but its position of only supporting a solution agreeable to both Kosovars and Serbs remains unchanged, she said. China's PermRep in New York Ambassador Wang Guangya has consulted with Serb and Kosovar representatives. China sees positions hardening, including among UNSC members, especially Russia, she said.

Chinese Interests, Peacekeepers Limited

¶3. (C) Hua said China has 15 police advisers now supporting the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The current rotation is China's fourth rotation of personnel with UNMIK. Hua observed that Ahtisaari's plan will require continued military support, but she said China has no position on whether it would continue to contribute personnel. Generally, China's interests in the Balkans are remote. Some 400 Chinese live in Kosovo, mostly operating restaurants and engaged in low-level trade, while the Chinese population of Serbia has reached 4,000, well down from the 10,000 Chinese in the region before the war, she said. China last year reopened its Embassy to Bosnia in Sarajevo, she said, adding that China has "no hard feelings" remaining from the bombing of its Embassy in Belgrade in 1999.

Kosovo Not A Major Topic for Hu and Putin

¶4. (C) China's interests in the Balkans are remote, but European and Russian interests are more acute and might merit deference, she suggested. Hua said Kosovo would come up on the margins of discussions between Presidents Hu and Putin

when Hu visits Russia March 26-28, but Kosovo is unlikely to be a major topic. Her Department was not asked to provide significant briefing materials on Kosovo for President Hu's trip, she said.

¶5. (C) Hua asked about United States' views on a Russian proposal that Ahtisaari be replaced as Special Envoy when his term expires in June and asked about American views on a unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo. Poloff told Hua that the State Department Spokesman on March 20 made clear that the United States supports Ahtisaari and provided her with a copy of pertinent points from the press briefing.

¶6. (C) MFA's International Organizations Department will have the lead on China's position for action in the UN Security Council, Hua stressed, but she noted that MFA is willing to have more exchange with the United States through regional departments on issues such as the Balkans. She said the meeting was the first her Department has had with officials from the United States Embassy, including during the period after the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in the former Yugoslavia.

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